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SUBJECT: Venezuela Hosts New FARC-Affiliated Organization

CLASSIFIED BY: Robin D. Meyer, Political Counselor, DOS, POL; REASON:
1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a meeting in Caracas on December 7-9, about 1,000 delegates from 24 countries established the Continental Bolivarian Movement (MCB), named FARC leader Alfonso Cano its honorary president, and expressed support for the FARC and for President Chavez's fight against "U.S. imperialism." The Venezuelan press noted the Ecuadorian Truth Commission report that claims the FARC used the precursor to the MCB as a front for its office in Caracas. While the MCB does not admit to an official connection with the Venezuelan government (GBRV), the logistics of the meeting and the similarity of positions between the MCB and the GBRV suggest a very close relationship. End summary.

Movement Launch Focuses on Colombia

¶2. (SBU) The MCB replaces the Continental Bolivarian Committee (CBC), which held its first meeting in Caracas in August 2003 and its second in Ecuador in February 2008. In the movement's launch in Caracas in early December, a reported 1,000 delegates from 24 countries agreed to "confront and defeat the imperialist strategy" and specifically denounced the "yankee bases" in Colombia. MCB spokesperson Juan Contreras said "we consider the FARC revolutionary comrades who use violence because there is no other option." He accused Colombian President Uribe of "closing" the road to peace and forcing the FARC to continue to use arms.

¶3. (SBU) The GBRV did not have a formal presence at the MCB meeting and the MCB does not acknowledge any formal connection to the GBRV on its website (conbolivariana.org). Notable, though, was the meeting venue, the Sala Plenaria de Parque Central, which is a room often used by the GBRV for large meetings with allied parties or groups, such as the community councils ("consejos comunales"), the youth wing of the Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), and ALBA.

¶4. (C) Central University of Venezuela professor of international relations Maria Teresa Belandria (protect) told Poloff December 16 that the establishment of the MCB reflected a change in profile, not a change in policy. "Chavez has had a relationship with these groups for a long time," she said, "and now they are just holding a

public conference too."

FARC Office in Caracas?

15. (U) Meanwhile, the Venezuelan press highlighted two key elements contained in the recently-released Ecuadorian Truth and Transparency Commission report on the 2008 Colombian raid into Ecuador: that FARC leader Ivan Marquez used the Continental Bolivarian Committee as a front for a FARC office in Caracas; and that the FARC allegedly trained at Fort Tiuna outside Caracas. However, a press interview with the Commission's Director minimized the latter charge by claiming that the unconfirmed information came from the CBC website.
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